

# Center for Youth Leadership

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Why wait for someone else to make a difference?

**Connecticut Legislature: Children's Committee**  
***Written Testimony in Support of Raised HB 6500: An Act***  
***Prohibiting the Publication of Advertisements for Commercial***  
***Sexual Acts That Depict a Minor***

*March 4, 2013*

Hi Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the committee. We have a special greeting for Senator Duff and Representative Wood, both of whom represent our hometown of Norwalk.

On behalf of the 226 members of the Center for Youth Leadership at Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk, we are writing in support of *Raised HB 6500, An Act Prohibiting the Publication of Advertisements for Commercial Sexual Acts That Depict a Minor*, because it corrects a major flaw that many advocates have with Public Act 12-141; namely, how the law does not hold the publishers of newspapers and websites accountable for publishing ads that exploit people my age.

The ultimate aim of many youth advocates is to eliminate these ads entirely, which we know is somewhat unrealistic, but at least HB 6500 is a major step in the right direction. It is consistent with laws introduced and/or enacted last year in Tennessee, New Jersey and Washington. And it takes into account the offer made last year by Chris VanDeHoef, the Executive Director of Connecticut Daily Newspaper Association (CDNA), to the Judiciary Committee; i.e., "One of the areas CDNA would be interested in exploring would be to potentially require a copy of the ID of a person in an ad to (be kept) on file with a copy of the ad prior to it running" (*public testimony in response to HB 5504, March 19, 2012*).

However, there are still some concerns. The ID of the person in the ad that is submitted to a newspaper or website may be fake. One ad is oftentimes used to sell a number of women and girls.

And then you have the lawsuits that were filed against the Washington and Tennessee laws that prompted "...a federal judge in Washington to impose a preliminary injunction (that) blocked the implementation of the law" (*Cyrus Fariver, "Washington State Online Sex Ad Law Stopped in Its Tracks," Arts Technica, July 28, 2012*).

In Tennessee a federal judge decided that its new law is a "violation of free speech and interstate commerce." Federal Judge John Nixon said, "The Constitution tells us that when freedom of speech hangs in the balance the state may not use a butcher knife on a problem that requires a scalpel to fix. Nor may a state enforce a law that flatly conflicts with federal law" (*Bobby Allyn, "Federal Judge Says Tennessee Law Targeting Online Sex Ads Curbs Free Speech, WBIR.COM, January 5, 2013*).

Nevertheless, we support Raised House Bill 6500. As you know, Connecticut has been on somewhat of a roll when it comes to addressing human trafficking and people our age. Public Acts 115 and 180 were enacted in the last two years.

Public and private agencies continue to identify and help victims of trafficking. More and more awareness campaigns educate the general public. And bills introduced in this legislative session look to vacate prostitution convictions of girls involved in trafficking; seize the assets of pimps; and require rest areas, truck stops and dance clubs to post information about human trafficking and the number of a national anti-trafficking hotline (*see SB 45 and SB 149*).

As Gary Levvis, a professor at the University of Connecticut, said last year, "...the responsibility for eliminating any chance that minors will be featured in such ads shouldn't be left to the pimps purchasing the ads. The time has come to realize that this form of speech poses a...risk to innocent persons. That is the challenge before us if we are to find a...way to eliminate this insidious pathway to the sexual exploitation of minors" (*"Attempt to Curb on Minors' in 'Escort' Ads Doomed," Hartford Courant, May 18, 2012*).

Sincerely,

Lexy Brown and Katie Levine  
Center for Youth Leadership

**NOTES:**

*Nicole Neroulias, "Washington State Sex Ads: U.S. Judge Considers Whether to Block Law," Reuters, July 7, 2012.*

*Maynard & Summer LLC, "New Jersey Bill Goes After Sex Advertising," June 29, 2012.*

*William Yardley, "Washington Is First State to Take On Escort Sites," New York Times, April 1, 2012.*

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